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‘Unarmed’ We Intervene, Unnoticed We Remain: The Deviant Case of ‘February 28th Coup’ in Turkey

Ömer Aslan

Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Bilkent University, Ankara/Turkey; Institute of Security Sciences, Turkish National Police Academy, Ankara/Turkey

ABSTRACT

When a military staged an intervention during the Cold War, students of civil-military relations could quite easily tell if it was a coup d'état. This no longer seems to be the case. The reason may be the regnant understanding of coup d'état as a violent (bloody), swift, and extralegal/extra-constitutional seizure of power by first and foremost military officers or members of state apparatus after a long time of secret planning. This article takes stock of political complexities surrounding coups in our times by studying the nationally and internationally neglected case of February 28th (1997) coup process in Turkey as a 'deviant case', based on newly-revealed military documents as primary sources and several previously unstudied memoirs by army officers of the period. It argues that the February 28th coup was deliberately stretched over a long process, it was violent but not bloody, was staged almost openly through 'theoretically constitutional political operations' and psychological warfare against the elected government. Several select 'civilian' groups from the media, judiciary, trade unions, and non-governmental organisations were happily enlisted by the military as active participants in the coup caravan and without them as unique and pioneering a coup as the February 28th could not be executed.

Introduction

Former Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovych claimed that he was turfed from office in a *coup* last year. Was it a *coup* when Hosni Mubarak resigned from office and relinquished his powers to the Supreme Council of Armed Forces in 2011 after wide popular protests?¹ Zeinel Abidin Ben Ali's wife, Leila Ben Ali, recently claimed that a *coup* forced her husband to flee the country.² Could it also be accepted as a *coup* when the Egyptian military ousted from power Egypt's first elected president, Mohammed Morsi, in July 2013? Students of civil-military relations (CMR) seem less capable than ever to provide a forthright answer to these questions. How can we explain this post-Cold War bafflement? The explanation this

CONTACT Ömer Aslan  aslano@bilkent.edu.tr

¹Ozan O. Varol, 'The Democratic Coup D'état', *Harvard International Law Journal* 53(2) (Summer 2012), p. 293.

²Gaëlle Le Roux, 'Ben Ali's wife blames general for Tunisia 'coup d'état'', *France 24*, 23 June 2012, <http://www.france24.com/en/20120623-ben-ali-wife-leila-blames-general-tunisia-coup-d-etat-saudi-arabia/>.

article offers is that CMR scholars have been far too preoccupied with the questions of *why and when armed forces* intervene that they have forgotten to revisit *who* intervenes and *how*. They presumed the 'classical' notion of coup d'état to be still valid and continued to assume that coups are planned in absolute secrecy and made by soldiers or members of state apparatus, suddenly, extra-legally/unconstitutionally and mostly, violently. Yet, could it be the case that the nature and method of coups have changed after the Cold War?

This paper argues that actors of coups and how they occur may have undergone an unnoticed but critical change after the Cold War by studying the February 28th (1997) coup process in Turkey as a 'deviant case'. As is well known, deviant case studies are particularly helpful in helping scholars 'refine the (operational) definitions of some or all of the variables'.³ Although propositions arrived by deviant case studies need further comparative studies to carry greater theoretical value, they might provide precious insights because they defy established generalisations.⁴ An in-depth study of the February 28th as a *deviant case of traditional coups* might allow us to better understand why coups are getting stranger and harder to define nowadays⁵ and help redraw the fine lines that exist between revolutions, coups and legitimate popular pressure.

It may be due to our old, but still prevalent, understanding of coups that several scholars have missed to capture the February 28th as coup that it really was. The February 28th is conspicuously absent from four major coup and civil unrest datasets compiled after the Cold War.⁶ The international neglect ran parallel to domestic neglect inside Turkey. Even though the February 28th coup has had significant reverberations in Turkish politics, it was either ignored altogether⁷ or it was simply glossed over as 'the strike by the Turkish military',⁸ 'Refah-Yol-military confrontation',⁹ 'soft military intervention (countermobilization)',¹⁰ and 'a move undertaken by the military'.¹¹ Surely, some studies referred to the February 28th as 'postmodern coup d'état', 'indirect intervention' or 'soft coup'; yet the adjectives of 'postmodern' and 'soft' were often used in order to steal from the *coupness* of February 28th.

³Arendt Lijphart, 'Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method', *The American Political Science Review*, 65(3) (1971), p. 682–93.

⁴James Mahoney, 'Qualitative Methodology and Comparative Politics', *Comparative Political Studies* 40(2) (2007), p. 122–44.

⁵Jonathan M. Powell, 'The Man who would be King?', 28 February 2014, <http://www.jonathanmpowell.com/blog/the-man-who-would-be-king>.

⁶Monty G. Marshall and Donna Ramsey Marshall, 'Coup D'état Events, 1946–2013', 2014, www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/CSPCoupsCodebook2013.pdf; Jonathan M. Powell and Clayton L. Thyne, 'Global Instances Of Coups From 1950 To 2010: A New Dataset', *Journal of Peace Research* 48(2) (2011), pp. 249–59; Ivan Perkins, *Vanishing Coup: The Pattern of World History since 1310* (London: Rowman Littlefield, 2013);

Nikolay Marinov and Hein Goemans, 'Coups and Democracy', *British Journal of Political Science* 44(4), (2014) p. 799–825; SPEED Project–Civil Unrest Event Data, *Cline Center for Democracy*, <http://www.clinecenter.illinois.edu/data/speed/event/> (accessed 14 February 2015).

⁷Yaprak Gürsoy, 'Türkiye'de Sivil-Asker İlişkilerinin Dönüşümünün Sebepleri', *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 11(43) (Fall 2014), pp. 157–80.

⁸Elisabeth Özdalga, 'Education In The Name Of 'Order And Progress' Reflections On The Recent Eight Year Obligatory School Reform In Turkey', *The Muslim World* 89(3–4) (1999), p. 414.

⁹Metin Heper and Aylin Güney 'The Military and the Consolidation of Democracy: The Recent Turkish Experience', *Armed Forces & Society* 26(4) (2000), p. 647.

¹⁰Banu Eligür, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 214.

¹¹Hasret Dikici Bilgin, 'Foreign Policy Orientation of Turkey's Pro-Islamist Parties: A Comparative Study of the AKP and Refah', *Turkish Studies* 9(3) (2010), p. 410; For a few articles describing the event in passing as a coup, see Karabelias, Gerassimos, 'Dictating the Upper Tide: Civil Military Relations in the Post-Özal Decade, 1993–2003', *Turkish Studies* 9(3) (2008), pp. 457–473, fn. 9; Tanel Demirel, 'Soldiers and Civilians', *Middle Eastern Studies* 40(1) (2004), pp. 127–50; Jeremy Salt, 'Turkey's Military Democracy', *Current History* 98 (1999), p. 72–8; M. Hakan Yavuz, 'Cleansing Islam from the Public Sphere', *Journal of International Affairs* 54(1) (2000), pp. 24–42. Yılmaz Colak, *Türkiye'de Devletin Kimlik Krizi ve Çeşitlilik: (Yeni-Osmanlı, İslamcı ve Kürtçü Meydan Okumalar)* (Ankara: Kadim, 2010).

The following comments by two scholars are cases in point: ‘the 1997 ‘post-modern’ coup, in which the Islamist government of Necmettin Erbakan was *gently ousted*.¹² Another academic said the February 28th was a postmodern coup *because* ‘the military observed what was coming and behaved in a way *less destructive* to the democratization process than a coup.’¹³ Taking advantage of our better access to so many more resources, including new memoirs written by retired officers and newly exposed military documents 17 years after the February 28th, this article argues that as opposed to past military coup d’états—planned mostly by army officers in utmost secrecy, carried out swiftly and extra-legally and violently—the February 28th coup was deliberately stretched over a long process, it was violent but not bloody, and was carried out openly through political machinations with the voluntary enlistment by the military of various civilian actors.

The February 28th Coup as the Harbinger of New Coups

A few scholars already noted the impact of structural factors on different dimensions of civil-military relations. Feldberg noted that ‘the role of the military is contingent upon the changing national and international environment with which it interacts and to which it must adapt.’¹⁴ Moskos et al. studied the changes in organisation of armed forces in several places after the end of the Cold War.¹⁵ Desch undertook a structural study of CMR for the same period, exploring how the diminishing level of external threats and rising internal threats were primed to influence CMR.¹⁶ Marinov and Goemans argued that in the post-Cold War era international pressure influenced how fast coup plotters decided to have free and competitive elections after coups.¹⁷

Whether the end of bipolar international structure after the collapse of the Soviets may have also shifted the *tactics* of military interventions, however, is still left unasked. As attested by Major General Erol Özkasnak, then-General Secretary of the Turkish General Staff and one of the leading Turkish officers of the February 28th process, who said that ‘this is what a military in the 21st century does; everybody expected us to stage a coup like September 12 1980 but we are the military of postmodern times. That’s how we do it. The duty to intervene befell on unarmed forces this time’ (*italics are added*),¹⁸ past tactics and strategies officers of ‘political armies’¹⁹ were not cast in stone. In other words, while ‘it was only befitting for a revolution [coup] in Turkey in the world of 1960s to be like May 27th 1960 coup’²⁰ it may very well be the case that militaries may have adapted their *methods* of intervention in response

¹²Ersel Aydınli, ‘A Paradigmatic Shift for the Turkish Generals and an End to the Coup Era in Turkey’, *The Middle East Journal* 63(4) (2009), p. 585, (*italics are mine*).

¹³Nil Şatana, ‘Transformation of the Turkish Military and the Path to Democracy’, *Armed Forces & Society* 34(3) (2008), p. 367, (*italics are mine*).

¹⁴G.A. Kourvetaris, ‘The Greek Army Officer Corps: Its Professionalism and Political Interventionism’, in Morris Janowitz and Jacques Van Doorn (eds), *On Military Intervention* (Rotterdam University Press, 1971), p. 156.

¹⁵Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams and David R Segal (eds), *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁶Michael C. Desch, *Civilian Control of The Military, The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

¹⁷Marinov and Goemans, ‘Coups and Democracy’, p. 800.

¹⁸İsmet Berkan, ‘Hepimiz Kullandık’, T24, 16 April 2012, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/ismet-berkan-medya-28-subatin-parcasi-oldu-hepimiz-kullanildik,201729>.

¹⁹Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt (eds), *Political Armies, The Military and Nation Building in the Age of Democracy* (London: Zed Books, 2002).

²⁰M. Emin Aytekin, *İhtilal Çıkmaızı* (İstanbul:Dünya Matbaası, 1967), p. 219.

to changing international and domestic circumstances. The February 28th coup process is an apposite case in point. As Major General Özkasnak frankly put it,

*February 28th was made in accordance with the circumstances of the period. A military coup similar to September 12th (1980) and 12 March (1971) in Turkey was unthinkable under domestic and global conditions in 1997. The [Islamist] danger to the secular Turkish Republic was overcome by mobilization of democratic mechanisms and without firing a single bullet and causing a nosebleed. This is why we used the term 'unarmed forces' [to describe the coup actors].*²¹

Commenting on the February 28th process, another retired general said 'by behaving in this manner, [Turkey's] generals sent old-fashion coups into dustbin of history and embraced a whole new tactic/strategy to fulfill their mission of protecting the Turkish Republic'.²² Former Commander of Land Forces Aytaç Yalman (2002-2004) also argued that the armed forces adopted 'a new style of action' (*yeni bir eylem tarzı*) during the February 28th process.²³ It is often forgotten that officers in interventionist armies may closely observe domestic and international political developments, weigh their intervention opportunities under new circumstances, revise their tactics, and seek new allies.

The February 28th as a Cornerstone Event

The February 28th coup was a watershed event in Turkish politics. One of its immediate consequences was the split between 'Traditionalists' and 'Reformists' inside the *Milli Görüş Hareketi* (National View Movement). This division later paved the way for the 'conservative democratic' political party, the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi- Justice and Development Party), founded by the younger, reformist wing in 2001 and the ensuing gradual transformation of Turkish Islamism.²⁴ It was the February 28th coup that enabled the AKP to form the single-party government after the 2002 general elections in the first place. For the coup process was not only deeply unpopular it also exposed the compliance with the status quo of left and right centre political parties.²⁵ The February 28th process further eroded the people's confidence in politicians and political parties,²⁶ which had already been low in the first place.²⁷ It was no wonder that only the CHP and newly founded AKP [Republican People's Party] were able to pass the 10 per cent threshold in 2002 elections.

The February 28th coup had resulted in another split between the *Milli Görüş* and the Gülen movement, a supposedly faith-based organisation. The Refah blamed Fethullah Gülen for ingratiating with the military to save his own flock from being persecuted. Gülen went on TV channels and gave interviews to newspapers, which were close to the secularist circles, during the coup process and 'rejected the claim that National Security Council resolutions amounted to a coup. He argued that the military wanted to solve the crisis through democratic means and that the General Staff was acting in the spirit of their constitutional authority.

²¹Hulki Cevizoğlu, *Generalinden 28 Şubat İtirafı: Post-Modern Darbe* (İstanbul: Ceviz Kabuğu, 2001), p. 56–7 (italics and brackets are added).

²²Nevzat Bölügiray, *28 Şubat Süreci*. v.1 (İstanbul: Tekin, 1999), p. 237.

²³Aytaç Yalman, *Zorlu Yılların Sessiz Tanığı-I: Vatana Adanmış Bir Hayat* (İstanbul: Kastaş, Aralık 2014), p. 140.

²⁴M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 6–8.

²⁵Ümit Cizre and Menderes Çınar, 'Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism and Politics in the Light of February 28 Process,' *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102(2/3) (Spring/Summer 2003), p. 316–17.

²⁶Yılmaz Esmer, *Devrim, Evrim, Statüko: Türkiye'de Sosyal Siyasal Ekonomik Değerler* (İstanbul: TESEV Yayınları, 1999), pp. 41–6; Şükrü Elekdağ, 'Halkta Güven Bunalımı' *Milliyet*, 29 April 2001. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2001/04/29/yazar/elekdağ.html>.

²⁷Mehran, Kamrava, 'Pseudo-Democratic Politics and Populist Possibilities: The Rise and Demise of Turkey's Refah Party,' *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25(2) (1998), p. 286.

In fact, soldiers were at times more democrats than civilians'.²⁸ The Gülen movement, on the contrary, was frustrated with Erbakan's actions, which they thought were imprudent. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clearly seen today mutual suspicions between the AK Party, the leaders of which were former companions of Erbakan, and the Gülen movement must have been bottled up for years, even as they entered into a political marriage of convenience. Nevertheless, this precarious alliance now lies in ruins after the corruption probe started by the Turkish police, believed to be dominated by members of the Gülen movement, against some leading AK Party ministers on 17 December 2014. A fierce political battle broke out. What is remarkable, however, is that both sides have sought to discredit each other claiming that the other has become worse than the ruthless military and civilian actors of the February 28th coup.²⁹ This shows the deep scars the February 28th coup must have left in the minds of two Islamic-oriented groups in Turkey and underlines the extent to which the coup subsequently influenced the trajectory of Turkish politics.

Coup d'état: What's in a Name?

Several students of CMR have either taken for granted what coup is or they rested on Cold War time definitions of the concept when they were actually writing about the subject *after* the Cold War. For instance, Schiff, who brought important new insights into the post-Cold War CMR literature by her 'concordance theory', defined coup by referring to Luttwak, who had thought during the Cold War that coup d'état is made by military officers.³⁰ The meaning of the concept must have been so obvious to Nordlinger and Desch that they left the concept undefined in their books.³¹ The latter only said an edited volume that 'coups are direct seizures of power by the military'.³² A traditional coup d'état is attributed mostly to military officers.³³ Extant categorisations of 'army roles in politics' reflected this type of thinking. In these classifications, the military arbitrates/moderates, guards/corrects, and rules,³⁴ displaces and supplants³⁵ and rules and moderates³⁶ and influences and blackmails civilian governments.³⁷ Goemans and Marinov recently took

²⁸Gülen'in 28 Şubat Yorumu: Asker Anayasal Yetkisini Kullandı' [Gülen's Comments on the February 28th: The Military Used its Constitutional Power], T24, 13 April 2012, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/fethullah-gulen-28-subat-icin-ne-demisti,201569>.

²⁹Burak Kılıç and Derviş Genç, '28 Şubat'tan Beter' [Worse Than the February 28th], *Zaman*, 16 January 2014; Bu Millet bu Hançeri Unutmaz [This Nation Will not Forget This Stab in the Back], *Yeni Şafak* 1 March 2014.

³⁰Rebecca Schiff, *The Military and Domestic Politics: A Concordance Theory of Civil-Military Relations* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 21.

³¹Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1977).

³²Michael Desch, 'Threat Environments and Military Missions', in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (eds), *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 12–30; Also see Barbara Geddes, 'What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?', *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999): pp. 115–44, 128.

³³Harvey G. Kebschull, 'Operation "Just Missed": Lessons from Failed Coup Attempts', *Armed Forces and Society* 20(4) (1994), p. 565; Brian D. Taylor, 'Russia's Passive Army: Rethinking Military Coups', *Comparative Political Studies* 34(8) (2001): p. 926; E. J. Hobsbawm, 'How to Plot Your Takeover', *The New York Review of Books*, 21 August 1969, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1969/aug/21/how-to-plot-your-takeover/>; Ruth First, *The Barrel of a Gun: Political Power in Africa and the Coup d'Etat* (London: Penguin, 1970), p. 19; Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 10; Talukder Maniruzzaman, 'Arms Transfers, Military Coups, and Military Rule in Developing States', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36(4) (2012), p. 734; Aaron Belkin and Evan Schofer, 'Coup Risk, Counterbalancing and International Conflict', *Security Studies* 14(1) (2005), p. 144.

³⁴Talukder Maniruzzaman, *Military Withdrawal from Politics: a Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1987), pp. 61–82.

³⁵Schiff, *The Military and Domestic Politics*, p. 22.

³⁶Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics*, pp. 22–8.

³⁷Finer, Samuel E., *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*. 2nd ed. (London: Westview Press and Pinter Publishers, 1988), pp. 127–38;

a broader understanding of the concept 'as the seizure of effective executive authority through the threat or use of force' and they acknowledge that actors perpetrating the coup may include the military, the police, a domestic armed group, a member of the governing elite or some other set of domestic actors'.³⁸ Yet, they still seem to think that a coup has a leader or leaders, who upon their *forceful takeover* may decide on whether to have elections and run for it themselves.

Despite the more recent recognition that coup actorness is not limited to armed forces,³⁹ the identity of perpetrators remains restricted to (civilian or armed) members of state apparatus or government. The civilian role is seen limited to either just resisting a coup attempt⁴⁰ or 'inducing'/calling for a coup.⁴¹ Singh recognises an additional role that civilian protestors might play; that is, when a military faction openly backs them.⁴² Yet, the role played by 'civilian' groups, who did not resist coups, did not actually knock the military's doors to invite an intervention and do not just passively watch the army to intervene either, but voluntarily agree when recruited by the military, not as 'auxiliary force in noncombatant functions';⁴³ but as active participants in a wholesale campaign to bring an elected government down is still uncovered. Only Encarnación seems to have captured very well the novel role fulfilled by 'civil society' in occurrence of coup d'états by studying post-Cold War military interventions in Ecuador and Venezuela. As for Ecuador, while it *used to be generals* that dethroned Latin American presidents, this time a continuous general strike supported by business and labour unions incapacitated the government and eventually caused the downfall of Ecuador's elected president in 1997.⁴⁴ Mass protests by a coalition of business, labour and civilian groups enabled the military overthrow of President Chavez in 2002 as well.⁴⁵ This, however, does not change the fact that this perspective on coups is still nascent.

Four past characteristics of coups emerge from these definitions: *speed, secrecy, and extra-legality* and *army officers as its main actors*. Luttwak stated already during the Cold War that 'if speed is often important in military operations, in the coup it is an essential requirement'.⁴⁶ As Kebschull also pointed out, 'a coup d'état is commonly defined as a *speedily* executed, *extralegal* takeover of a government by a *conspiratorial* group, usually consisting of *army officers*, that uses force or the threat of force to remove the government or assume power for itself'.⁴⁷ Huntington said of coups that 'laying the groundwork for them [coups] may take long time but 'actual seize of power' happens on the *day* a coup is *launched*' (italics

³⁸Marinov and Goemans, 'Coups and Democracy', pp. 801–2.

³⁹Powell and Thyne, 'Global Instances', pp. 250–1.

⁴⁰See Jerzy J. Wiatr, 'The Military Regime in Poland, 1926–1939, in a Comparative Perspective', in Morris Janowitz and Jacques Van (eds), *On Military Intervention* (Rotterdam: Rotterdam University Press, 1971), pp. 61–91, p. 65; Edward Luttwak, *Coup D'etat: Practical Handbook* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969).

⁴¹Fitch, John Samuel, *The Military Coup D'etat as a Political Process: Ecuador, 1948–1966*. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 63.

⁴²Naunihal Singh, *Seizing Power: the Strategic Logic of Military Coups*. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), pp. 38–9.

⁴³Wiatr, 'The Military Regime', p. 65.

⁴⁴Ecuador's post-modern coup, *The Economist* 15 February 1997.

⁴⁵Omar G. Encarnación, 'Venezuela's 'Civil Society Coup'', *World Policy Journal* 19(2) (2002), pp. 38–48.

⁴⁶Luttwak, *Coup D'etat*, p. 149.

⁴⁷Kebschull, 'Operation "Just Missed"', p. 566, (my italics).

are added).⁴⁸ Several others concur.⁴⁹ The following is how a coup happened during the Cold War:

The clock strikes 4 AM. Over the radio a codeword is transmitted. Upon hearing this signal, 2 armored brigades and 1 infantry brigade move out from their barracks just outside the city limits. Within minutes troops have cordoned off the capital and the state's two other major cities, surrounding the state television, radio station, airport and major roads. Troops then moved toward the offices of the two main political parties and the residences of the party leaders and prime minister. The junta—consisting of the Chief of the General Staff, various generals, and a handful of field-rank officers fanned out to key government offices, the television and radio stations.⁵⁰

Truly, almost all military coups in the Middle East followed the same script during the Cold War.⁵¹ The classical coup d'état in Turkey in September 1980 and coups in Latin America⁵² followed exact same patterns as well. When old-fashion coups are taken into account, it would be easy to conclude that 'as extralegal efforts to secure political power, coups are always potentially violent operations' and coup leaders must be ready to be ruthless.⁵³ What is meant by being ruthless and violent, however, is that blood is spilt during and after a coup. Huntington, for instance, equated 'violence' with the amount of 'blood' spilt and lives lost when he said 'violence employed in coups is usually small' and that 'most coups in most areas of the world involve only a handful of deaths'.⁵⁴ Marshall and Marshall measured 'violence' as one of the criteria of a coup by 'the number of persons killed during the coup and/or as a direct result of the coup event. A coup can indeed be bloodless,⁵⁵ but this should not be equated to non-violence. As will be discussed, no blood was spilt during the February 28th coup process but the coup itself was very violent, only in a different sense.

The February 28th Coup by 'Process'

The following has become the standard, yet equally misleading, account of how February 28th happened:

At a February 28, 1997 meeting of the NSC, the military issued an 18-point list of policy recommendations to the True Path-Welfare Party coalition government. The list focused on extending compulsory education from five to eight years and restricting the activities of religious schools and private Quran courses which that military believed were fostering anti-secular values. Erbakan, already under pressure from radical elements within his party for not implementing his election manifesto, refused to carry out the NSC recommendations and was ousted in June 1997.⁵⁶

⁴⁸Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 218; also see Marshall and Marshall, 'Coup D'état Events, 1946-2013', p. 2.

⁴⁹Wiatr, 'The Military Regime', p. 64 (italics are added); Claude Emerson Welch (ed.), *Civilian Control of the Military: Theory and Cases From Developing Countries* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1976), p.1; Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics*, p. 5; Singh, *Seizing Power*, p. 16; Ruth First, *The Barrel of a Gun: Political Power in Africa and the Coup d'Etat* (London: Penguin, 1970), p. 19; David C. Rapoport, 'The Praetorian Army: Insecurity, Venality, and Impotence', in Roman Kolkowicz and Andrzej Korbonski (eds.), *Soldiers, Peasants and Bureaucrats: Civil-Military Relations in Communist and Modernizing Societies* (Boston, MA: G. Allen & Unwin 1982), p. 257; Keith Hopkins, 'Civil-Military Relations in Developing Countries', *The British Journal of Sociology* 17(2) (1966), p. 178; Patrick J. McGowan, 'African Military Coups D'état, 1956–2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41(3) (2003), p. 342.

⁵⁰Luttwak quoted in Paul Ernest Lenze Jr., 'Civil-Military Relations in "Islamic Democracies": Military Intervention & Withdrawal in Algeria, Pakistan, & Turkey' (Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington State University, 2011), p. 1.

⁵¹Derek Hopwood, *Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia: the Tragedy of Longevity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), p. 104; Hazem Qandil, *Soldiers, Spies, and Statesmen: Egypt's Road to Revolt* (London: Verso, 2014), p. 179.

⁵²Hopkins, 'Civil-Military Relations in Developing Countries', p. 165; Fitch, *The Military Coup*, pp. 40, 62.

⁵³Kebschull, 'Operation "Just Missed"', p. 573.

⁵⁴Huntington, *Political Order*, p. 239.

⁵⁵McGowan, 'African Military', p. 343; Powell and Thyne, 'Global Instances', p. 251.

⁵⁶Nilüfer Narlı, 'Civil-Military Relations in Turkey', *Turkish Studies* 1(1) (2007), pp. 115–6.

This is an incorrect portrayal of the February 28th coup process because the military had started to stalk the Islamic-oriented 'Welfare Party' (*Refah Partisi*) even before the municipal elections in 1994 when the Refah, deemed an anti-systemic Islamist political party, won local administration in major Turkish cities. The 1994 municipal elections came as the first shock.⁵⁷ Arcayürek, who was then-advisor to President Süleyman Demirel, noted that the General Staff commissioned a polling firm to help them predict the upcoming general election results and was very perturbed by its results.⁵⁸ In an ironic move, the military tried to exploit the power of religion—something they always blamed politicians for—to undermine Refah's appeal by commissioning some Turkish theology professors to write a book entitled 'İslam Gerçeği' [The Truth of Islam].⁵⁹

Refah's subsequent win in the 1995 general elections sent shivers through the Kemalist state establishment and military circles.⁶⁰ In the words of Admiral Erkaya, 'there were other political parties that sought regime change in Turkey before. Yet, it was the first time, the Refah, as one of such political parties, got the chance to actually capture the government seat.'⁶¹ The swift rise of the Refah became the embodiment of increasingly public visibility of Muslim identity as one of the worst fears of the Kemalist state establishment for about the last century. It automatically triggered the most fundamental fault line around the issue of 'secularism' as the linchpin of Kemalist regime. Various 'secular' Kemalist forces, starting with the military, mobilised accordingly. The military brass warned leaders of two centre-right political parties, Doğru Yol Partisi (the True Path Party) and Anavatan Partisi (the Motherland Party), not to consider building coalition with it. They urged leaders of these parties to as soon as possible reconcile and form an anti-Refah government.⁶² It is claimed that then-chief of General Staff İsmail Hakkı Karadayı paid a visit to Mustafa Kalemli, the Chairman of the TGNA (Turkish Grand National Assembly), to let him know about their misgivings and ask him to convey their concerns to other political leaders.⁶³ The patchwork Ana-Yol government, which could hardly be formed without the military's push, was short-lived. Doğru Yol and the Refah Party eventually formed, against the wishes of the military, the Refah-Yol government in June 1996. The military and the mainstream media then accelerated its actions against the Refah.⁶⁴ The Chief of Staff Karadayı's analogy between the rise of the Refah and the rise of Khoumeni and later Islamic Revolution in Iran was meant to admonish the government that Turkey's generals would not be as naïve and late to respond as the Iranian generals were with the rise of fundamentalists before the Iranian Revolution.⁶⁵ The nation-wide protests, called 'Sürekli Aydınlık İçin Bir Dakika Karanlık Eylemleri' [A Minute of Darkness for Permanent Brightness], began for the sake of transparency and democracy but 'morphed into the anti-government campaign' shortly after.⁶⁶ The 'Psychological Operations Unit' of the Turkish General Staff initiated a psychological warfare against the government

⁵⁷Quinn Mecham, 'From The Ashes of Virtue, A Promise Of Light: The Transformation of Political Islam In Turkey', *Third World Quarterly* 25(2) (2004), p. 342.

⁵⁸Cüneyt Arcayürek, *Büyükler Masallar Küçüklere Gerçekler: 28 Şubat'a İlk Adım* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2003), p. 152.

⁵⁹Saygı Öztürk, *Belgelerle 28 Şubat Düünden Bugüne* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2013), p. 13.

⁶⁰Rtd. Gen. Sabri Yirmibeşoğlu, *Askeri ve Siyasi Anılarım*, Vol. I, (İstanbul: Kastaş Yayınevi, 1999), p. 294.

⁶¹Güven Erkaya and Taner Baytok, *Bir Asker Bir Diplomat* (İstanbul: Doğan, 2001), p. 245; also see Yalman, *Zorlu*, p. 141.

⁶²Mehmet Bican, *28 Şubat'ta Devrilmek* (İstanbul: Truva Yayınları, 2013), p. 107; Ali Bayramoğlu, *28 Şubat Süreci: Bir Müdahalenin Güncesi* (İstanbul: Birey Yayıncılık, 2001), p. 45; Mehmet Ali Birand, and Reyhan Yıldız, *Son Darbe 28 Şubat* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2012), pp. 139–40, 136.

⁶³Mustafa Kalemli, *Kalemli'nin Kaleminden* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık, 2002), p. 245.

⁶⁴Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, 'The Malaise of Turkish Democracy', *Middle East Report*, 28 (Winter 1998), p. 33.

⁶⁵Cüneyt Arcayürek, *Büyükler Masallar Küçüklere Gerçekler: Geri Dönüşe İzin Yok* (Ankara: Bilgi Yay, 1999), p. 204.

⁶⁶Birand and Yıldız, 2012, p. 172.

by fabricating shocking and disturbing news for the media and organising protest meetings and marches.⁶⁷

Top-ranking generals met at the Navy Command in Gölcük for a war simulation on 22-24 January 1997. They had the opportunity there to 'reflect on the state of the country, its vulnerability to the Islamist domination and how to get into further action to counter the threat'.⁶⁸ On 4 February 1997 tanks rolled on the streets of Sincan, a neighbourhood at the nation's capital. The official explanation by the military was that tanks were on their way to a regular military exercise, but everybody knew that it was a show of intimidation.⁶⁹ The deputy chief of staff at the time, General Çevik Bir, said that tanks moved on the streets of Sincan to 'fine-tune Turkey's democracy'. The infamous NSC meeting followed on 28 February 1997. An unusual document entitled 'The Measures to be Taken Against Religious Reactionist Hostilities Against the Regime' and consisting of 18 articles, was added to the usual National Security Council Decisions. These draconian measures the military brass demanded the government to implement right away were not decided during the meeting, however. The top-ranking generals had already decided in a closed meeting after the NSC meeting in December 1996 and made a list of measures that would be handed to the Islamic-oriented government.⁷⁰ This and an official military document dated 19 February 1997 show that the military had already sent out instructions to its land and naval forces to use their officers and their families to collect intelligence on governors, mayors as well as civilian associations, foundations, dormitories, university faculties and professional associations.⁷¹

Batı Çalışma Grubu [Western Study Group- BÇG] was later founded at the General Staff Headquarters. Western Working Group exerted enormous power during the coup process, raining down the military hierarchy various types of orders such as 'daily orders' and 'continuous/principle orders' to track down Islamic fundamentalism and contain/eliminate it.⁷² As its *Batı Çalışma Grubu Rapor Sistemi* [Western Study Group Report System] dated 29 April 1997 showed, all garrisons and military posts in residential areas were ordered to collect intelligence on places and members of *tariqahs*, *dergahs*, *tekke*, Koranic schools, *İmam-Hatip* schools and student dormitories, *hutbas* in all mosques and report suspected events in the form of *Batı Çalışma Grubu Günlük Durum Raporları* [Western Study Group Daily Situation Reports] and *Batı Çalışma Grubu Olay Bildirim Raporları* [Western Study Group Incident Notification Reports] to the headquarters of Western Study Group at the General Staff in Ankara.⁷³ The headquarters would then notify the proper state authorities about these 'religious reactionist' activities and officially request them to take immediate measures.⁷⁴ Article (d) of *Batı Eylem Planı* [Western Action Plan] set as its goal to 'investigate, find out and expose to the public activities and investments of those political parties, foundations and

⁶⁷Nuran Yıldız, *Tanklar ve Sözcükler* (İstanbul: Alfa, 2007), p. 71.

⁶⁸Sedat Ergin, 'O Gece Gölcük'te Neler Konuştuk? *Hürriyet*, 3 November 1999; Cevizoğlu, *Generalinden 28 Şubat İtirafı*, p. 73.

⁶⁹See Erkaya and Baytok, *Bir Asker Bir Diplomat*, p. 253.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 251–2.

⁷¹Aslan Değirmenci, *28 Şubat'ın Çözülen Kodları* (İstanbul: Çıra, 2011), p. 36; Bülent Orakoğlu, *Deşifre: Darbeyi Rapor Ettim* (İstanbul: Timaş, 2003), p. 370.

⁷²See Retired Major General Ahmet Bertan Nogaylaroğlu, *Milli Görüş'ten Silivri'ye Bir General* (İstanbul: İrfan. Şubat, 2015), p. 130–1, 178.

⁷³Öztürk, *Belgelerle 28 Şubat Düünden Bugüne*, p. 109.

⁷⁴Yıldız, 2000, p. 179–80; Doğan Temel, *Torunum Sana Hangi Birini Anlatsam* (İstanbul: Cem, 2007), p. 143.

associations, institutions and other organizations, media organizations, financial institutions and business groups that support religious reactionist activities and hurt the country'.⁷⁵

In the following months General Çetin Doğan, during a briefing to the press, announced the new 'National Military Strategic Concept' (*MASK: Milli Askeri Strateji Konsepti*), in which 'Islamic reactionalism' (*irtica*), rather than Kurdish separatism or any other external threat, became the number one threat to Turkey's security.⁷⁶ The General Staff was afflicted with the paranoia of undefined 'religious reactionism', which in the end caused divisions within the Turkish Armed Forces and damaged its unity as well. The military collected intelligence on what they called 'Islamist or Green capital' as well. Judges and public prosecutors were 'informed' in a briefing in June 1997, prepared jointly by General Staff Intelligence and General Staff's Counter-Intelligence and Security Department, that 'the Islamist business class was already in control of half of Turkey's gross domestic product (GDP). In 1997, the Islamists owned 19 newspapers, 110 magazines, 51 radio stations, 20 TV channels, 2,500 associations, 500 foundations, more than a thousand companies, 1,200 dormitories, and more than 800 private schools and university exam-preparation courses'.⁷⁷ In response to this 'threat', the military made known a list of 100 Islamic companies that it from thenceforth banned from participating in all sorts of military tenders.⁷⁸ Then on 12 June 1997 pro-military *Hürriyet* daily ran a headline saying that a high-ranking officer stated in a closed briefing that if push comes to shove the military will not shy away using their guns.⁷⁹

'Unarmed Forces' in Action

Civilians may indeed participate in coups by calling an army to do its 'patriotic duty' and 'save the country from ruin'.⁸⁰ However, civilian exhortations for coup was reversed in the case of February 28th coup d'état, as *it was the military this time that openly called secular Kemalist civilian groups* to fulfil their 'patriotic duty'.⁸¹ Civilian protests did not start spontaneously. Admiral Erkaya extended the military's open invitation to these groups in late 1996 with the following sentences:

The society is in a state of deep inertia. Everybody is far too relaxed because they think if things go too bad, the armed forces are here to resolve problems. Even the leader of main opposition suffers from this lazy mood. Yet, the army should not be expected to solve political problems. Civilian actors, MPs, and Parliament should find the solution. Solution must be looked for in these platforms. This time *unarmed forces* must deal with the issue.⁸²

The idea, as echoed in a similar thinking by a Major General a decade later, was that preserving the secular Republican nation-state founded by Atatürk and early elite befell on the Republican prosecutors, Turkish military, universities, Turkey's secular intelligentsia, and ordinary people themselves as its designated inheritors.⁸³ The entire gamut of Turkey's secular forces firmly aligned themselves against what they perceived as an existential 'Islamic threat' during the February 28th coup process. As Cizre and Çınar pointed out, 'the Turkish military,

⁷⁵Öztürk, *Belgelerle 28 Şubat Dünden Bugüne*, p. 103.

⁷⁶Eligür, *The Mobilization*, p. 222.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸Hulki Cevizoğlu, *28 Şubat: Bir Hükümet Nasıl Devrildi?* (İstanbul: Ceviz Kabuğu Yayınları, 2001), p. 205.

⁷⁹'Gerekirse Silah Bile Kullanırız', *Hürriyet*, 12 June 1997.

⁸⁰Fitch, *The Military Coup*, p. 6.

⁸¹See Eligür, *The Mobilization*, pp. 219–20; Yavuz, *Secularism*, p. 65.

⁸²Özkök, 1996.

⁸³Retired Major General Yalçın Ergül, *Bir Komutanın Not Defteri* (İstanbul: Ka Kitap, 2014), p. 57.

former President Süleyman Demirel (1993-2000), the civil societal network of the secular establishment, media, and large sectors of the populace believe that Islamic reactionism constitutes the chronic, if at times undetectable malaise of the Turkish polity.⁸⁴ The idea of close collaboration between these forces was not new though; at least some high-ranking military officers were aware that 'it was not prudent to stage a military coup unless *approved* by universities, media, legal forces, and the man on the streets'.⁸⁵ The February 28th coup process differed in a single but most critical aspect, however; the military was no longer asking for after-party 'hosannas' from the state intelligentsia and other civilian actors, as they had done after 1960 military intervention.⁸⁶ They demanded active involvement *during* the coup process this time. As *Batı Harekat Konsepti*, *Batı Çalışma Grubu*, and *Batı Eylem Planı*, which have been accepted by the top-ranking generals of the period (now retired) as authentic and confirmed during the judicial process against the perpetrators of the coup, indicates, the military planned to 'shape public opinion with the help of political parties, universities, trade unions, democratic mass organizations, women and youth organizations, media, and catalyze people's reactions through protests, demonstrations and scientific meetings at all levels (such as panels, symposia, conference)'.⁸⁷ The plan worked very well, as Admiral Erkaya said in his memoirs that "unarmed forces' got the army's message [...] [Our call] caused instant stir in the streets".⁸⁸ Thus, we may say, by adapting a little of what Cercas had said for the 1981 coup in Spain, that 'from the summer of 1996 onward politicians, businessmen, trade unions and journalists were deliriously exaggerating the gravity of the situation' in the country.⁸⁹

Trade and Labour Unions in Action

If coup plotters maintained the old coup practices, they could have easily perceived trade unions as a potential threat to their chances of success due to trade unions' experience in industrial agitation and mobilisation.⁹⁰ Indeed, post-1980 coup authorities saw the Labour and Trade Union leaders as 'new *Aghas*, who exploited good intentions of innocent workers',⁹¹ and prohibited them from getting involved in political activities after the 1980 coup.⁹² In 1997 however, the military brass knew that they could count on the trade unions to support the coup. It was still startling that different trade unions such as Türk-İş [Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions], DİSK [Confederation of Progressive Labor Unions], TESK [Confederation of Turkish Tradesmen and Craftsmen], TOBB [The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey] and TİSK [Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations], which called themselves during the coup process the 'five-member gang' or 'initiative of the five', were able to come together in the first place. Despite being former archenemies, they formed an alliance and 'called for the resignation of the government. The disturbing side of the picture was that those associations were activated, if not actually mobilized, by the military and

⁸⁴Ümit Cizre ve Menderes Çınar, 'Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism and Politics in the Light of February 28 Process', *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102(2/3) (Spring/Summer 2003), pp. 310–11.

⁸⁵Yirmibeşoğlu, *Askeri ve Siyasal Anılatım*, Vol. II, (İstanbul: Kastaş, 1999), p. 180.

⁸⁶Kemal H. Karpat, 'Military Interventions: Army-Civilian Relations in Turkey Before and after 1980', in Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (eds), *State Democracy and the Military in Turkey in the 1980s*, p. 141.

⁸⁷Öztürk, *Belgelerle 28 Şubat Dünden Bugüne*, p. 209.

⁸⁸Erkaya and Baytok, *Bir Asker Bir Diplomat*, p. 280.

⁸⁹Javier Cercas, *The Anatomy of a Moment* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), p. 32.

⁹⁰See Luttwak, *Coup D'etat*, p. 145.

⁹¹Rtd. Lt. General and a former Commander of Martial Law Commands Nevzat Bölügeray, *Sokaktaki Askerin Dönüşü (12 Eylül Yönetimi)* (Tekin Yayınevi, 1991), pp. 126–30.

⁹²Şatana, 'Transformation of the Turkish Military', p. 361.

they were extremely circumspect regarding various actions by the military'.⁹³ They did more than just remain cautious though. The General Secretary of Türk-İş, Şemsi Denizler, said that, 'Turkish armed forces and non-governmental organizations are in unity. If a coup is necessary to protect Atatürkist principles and reforms, armed forces will undertake the job and we will support them'.⁹⁴ The Head of TİSK, Refik Baydur, called briefings given by the army as 'Turkish military reaching out to the nation' and 'the most democratic and civilized hug between the nation and its army'.⁹⁵ He argued in his memoirs that some policies of Refah greatly disturbed [Kemalist] state institutions loyal to the Republic and Atatürk reforms and therefore, there was a need for responsible institutions to put an end to this through 'democratic' means. And they, as the 'five-member gang' or 'initiative of the five' satisfied that need.⁹⁶

In the days after the NSC on February 28, heads of TÜRK-İŞ, DİSK and TESK sent a letter to all MPs in the parliament in which they called themselves 'Turkey's unarmed guardians' and reminded the MPs of the oath they made in the name of secularism and Atatürk's Republic. They thought that they would achieve their aims with 'clean, secular, honest, sensitive and Atatürkist MPs, who are independent of their party leaders'. Their wish came true a few months later with the resignation of some MPs from the coalition partner DYP.⁹⁷ TOBB, TESK, TÜRK-İŞ, DİSK and TİSK put out a joint public statement on 21 May 1997, in which they professed once again their faithfulness to the Atatürkist principles and reforms and indirectly blamed the government for undermining the foundation of the Turkish Republic and called for a new government.⁹⁸ The president of TESK, Derviş Günday, claimed that the government inexcusably fell into unacceptable opposition with bureaucracy, universities, soldiers, peasants, workers, NGOs, media, and state. Fundamentalists were attacking the secular and democratic Republic and the regime.⁹⁹

The Media

If we were to maintain our classical notion of a coup d'état, discussing the media as an actor of a coup would not make much sense: 'The press need not be a primary target; we will establish our authority over it after the coup', had said Luttwak.¹⁰⁰ Truly, the relationship of post-1980 coup military government in Turkey with the domestic media was one of confrontation, close watch, and censor. Turkey's then military ruler Kenan Evren said at a Supreme Military Council meeting on 25 November 1982 that 'newspapers care for one thing only: how many they sell'.¹⁰¹ The media had also been utilised in previous military incursions into politics *after* the coup for the *post-hoc* objective of providing justification for it because the military used to consider 'society as a spectator' not a 'potential actor in the events'.¹⁰² That is to say, normally we would not expect to see media reporters on the scene of a coup

⁹³Demirel, 'Soldiers and Civilians', p. 137.

⁹⁴Ezgi Gürses, *28 Şubat Demokrasi Ters Şeritte* (İstanbul: Şule Yayınları. 2012), p. 98.

⁹⁵Refik Baydur, *Bizim Çete* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap. 2000), p.45.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁹⁷Bölügiray, p. 26.

⁹⁸Tarihi Uyarı, *Sabah*, 22 May 1997.

⁹⁹Bican, *28 Şubat'ta Devrilmek*, p. 385.

¹⁰⁰Luttwak, *Coup D'etat*, p. 117.

¹⁰¹Lt. General Nevzat Bölügiray (Retd.), *Sokaktaki Askerin Dönüşü*, p. 121.

¹⁰²Michael Wuthrich, 'Commercial Media, the Military, and Society in Turkey during Failed and Successful Interventions', *Turkish Studies* 11(2) (2010), p.218.

attempt, since a coup was supposed to be an extralegal, surprise and swift event to allow for the media to broadcast it live.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, the role of media was entirely reversed in the February 28th, as it assisted *during*, not *after*, the February 28th coup process by creating favourable conditions. In other words, transformation of the media in Turkey from 'state-controlled' to 'private pluralistic' in the 1990s partly shaped the way the coup was executed this time. That in turn demanded that media be used in a different way for a different purpose. The following comment by Javier Cercas on the 1981 coup in Spain explains the overall role of the media on the February 28th coup in Turkey:

... in much of the media the criticism of Suarez [Erbakan] is brutally harsh and contributes to spurring on the coup d'état mentality, feeding the phantom of an emergency situation and giving space on their pages to constant rumors of political operations and hard or soft coups under way that, rather than prevent them, serves to prepare the ground for them.¹⁰⁴

The army brass wrote in the document named *Batı Harekat Konsepti* that 'the role the media plays in raising the awareness in public opinion is very significant. Some major media corporations that have indisputable loyalty to the secularism principle must prioritize these lofty principles and the Republic as a national duty over their ratings wars.'¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the primary function the media assumed was to sell to the public the 'fundamentalist threat' and convince them that the rise in deviant and bizarre Islamic practices shown on and newspapers was due to the government. Here the media, especially the TV created a 'reality effect' to imbue a non-existing reality to fictive threats.¹⁰⁶ The most memorable example of this was the 'Fadime Şahin-Müslüm Gündüz affair', in which Şahin, a young veiled lady, was caught on camera in an improper situation with Gündüz, who happened to be the leader of the Aczmendi sect, which nobody had heard of until then. It was later found out that the whole episode was another psychological warfare executed this time by notorious JİTEM [Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Agency]. Not coincidentally, *Batı Eylem Planı* said that top brass would try to make sure that 'issues around Aczmendi, sham and deviant religious figures would remain in circulation in the media'.¹⁰⁷

In an unusual practice the military picked some journalists and gave them certificates in the National Security Academy.¹⁰⁸ Some dissident journalists, nevertheless, were heavily pressured to fall into place. The journalists who were too vocal in criticising the military's actions were subjected to psychological and political operations. For instance, some reputable journalists, who were at loggerheads with the military's tutelage over politics, were accused of being 'PKK İşbirlikçileri' [PKK Collaborators]. The claim was that one of the top PKK members confessed in his interrogation that some well-known journalists were on PKK's payroll. It was found out later that the entire show was another operation of psychological warfare designed by the plotters of February 28th.¹⁰⁹ Several columnists, media patrons and executives of the period, who positioned themselves at the forefront of the war against the

¹⁰³Kebschull, 'Operation "Just Missed"', pp. 570–1.

¹⁰⁴Cercas, *The Anatomy*, pp. 38–9.

¹⁰⁵Çiçek, 1997, p. 69.

¹⁰⁶Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television* (New York: The New Press, 1998), p. 21.

¹⁰⁷Öztürk, *Belgelerle 28 Şubat Düünden Bugüne*, p. 105.

¹⁰⁸Abdurrahman Dilipak, 'His Testimony to the Parliamentary Research Commission for Coups and Memorandums', 2012. www.tbmm.gov.tr/arastirma_komisyonlari/darbe_muhtira/docs/tutanak_son/28_subat_alt_komisyonu/28_subat_alt_komisyonu/03.10.2012/Abdurrahman%20Dilipak-03.10.2012.pdf).

¹⁰⁹See Ilıcak, 2001, pp. 9–14, 55–6.

government, now admit to being pressured by the generals to toe the anti-government campaign line.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, the *willingness* on the part of the media to facilitate a coup process such as the February 28th needs to be duly noted.¹¹¹

The Judiciary

Turkey's Kemalist judicial organs played their part in the process as well. The Presidents of High Judicial bodies made it their habit during February 28th to publicly scold the Refah in their speeches during official ceremonies, which the TV used to air live. The President of Turkey's Supreme Court, President of the Constitutional Court, and President of Union of Turkish Bar Associations reprimanded the government during official public ceremonies in the coup process. Chief Prosecutor Vural Savaş moved fast after the government resigned and demanded the closure of the Refah, to which the Constitutional Court responded by shutting it down and banning some Islamist politicians. Savaş said that shortly after he applied to the Constitutional Court for the closure of Refah, the General Staff sent him loads of documents, which he believed to have been prepared by *Batı Çalışma Grubu*, to support his closure case.¹¹²

Members of judicial organs were enlisted by the military through specially prepared briefings as well. Some 420 judges and prosecutors as well as the head and most members of the Constitutional Court and Council of State attended a briefing delivered by a high-ranking general at the General Staff on 10 June 1997. While some judges and prosecutors cooperated fully with the military in suspending freedoms, other prosecutors, who struck down university administrations' ban on wearing veil at university campuses for instance, were given punitive relocations. 'The Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors' swiftly carried out such measures against dissident voices inside the state establishment.¹¹³

Süleyman Demirel, then president, was a powerful player on his own account during the coup process. While Demirel did at times seem to be trying to avert a military coup d'état by openly warning the Refah-Yol government, he in fact ensured that a coup still occurred without the military needing to leave its barracks. Demirel viewed the civilian protests against the incumbent government, for instance on 10 November Atatürk Memorial Day, as 'the owners of the regime finally showing themselves'.¹¹⁴ Demirel readily accepted when the General Staff wanted to brief him about the threat of religious reactionism. Demirel then almost guided the military by saying that 'this threat could be tackled if the state takes

¹¹⁰Mehmet Barlas and Canan Barlas, 'Their Testimony to the Parliamentary Research Commission for Coups and Memorandums', 2012, www.tbmm.gov.tr/arastirma_komisyonlari/darbe_muhtira/docs/tutanak_son/28_subat_alt_komisyonu/28_subat_alt_komisyonu/04.10.2012/Mehmet-Canan%20Barlas-04.10.2012.pdf; Er, Rahim, '28 Şubat İsyan Harekatı' [The February 28th As Rebel Movement] *Türkiye Gazetesi*, 28 February 2013; Taha Kıvanç, 'Herkes Bildiklerini Anlatırsa Ne Güzel Olacak' [Only If Everybody Told What They Knew] *Yeni Şafak*, 30 June 2009; Neşe Düzel, 'Gazetecilerin Paralı Ajanlık Kavgası' [Journalists' Fight over Paid Spying], *Taraf*, 15 March 2010; Zafer Mutlu, 'His Testimony to the Parliamentary Research Commission for Coups and Memorandums', 2012, www.tbmm.gov.tr/arastirma_komisyonlari/darbe_muhtira/docs/tutanak_son/28_subat_alt_komisyonu/28_subat_alt_komisyonu/05.10.2012/Zafer%20Mutlu-05.10.2012.pdf; Dinç Bilgin, 'His Testimony to the Parliamentary Research Commission for Coups and Memorandums', 2012, www.tbmm.gov.tr/arastirma_komisyonlari/darbe_muhtira/docs/tutanak_son/28_subat_alt_komisyonu/28_subat_alt_komisyonu/05.10.2012/Dinç%20Bilgin-05.10.2012.pdf.

¹¹¹Andrew Finkel, 'Who Guards the Turkish Press? A Perspective on Press Corruption in Turkey', *Journal of International Affairs* 54(1) (2000), p. 161.

¹¹²Öztürk, *Belgelerle 28 Şubat Dünden Bugüne*, p. 69.

¹¹³Reşat Petek, '28 Şubat'ta Alınan güvenlik Tedbirleri, Bir Ceza Uygulamasına Dönüştü', in *Binyılın Sonu: 28 Şubat v. I.* (İstanbul: Pınar, 2012), p. 559.

¹¹⁴Cüneyt Arcayürek, *Geri Dönüş İzini Yok* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2003), pp. 336–7.

some practical measures such as preventing the government's penetration into the National Intelligence, TRT [Turkish Radio and Television Corporation], and universities. Demirel said, 'for instance, the government 'infiltrated some universities in the form of appointing close-minded university professors but he cleansed universities at the administrative level by rejecting government-led appointments'.¹¹⁵

Vural Savaş, former chief public prosecutor of Court of Cassation [Yargıtay], who filed the party closure case against the Refah, said in his memoirs that President Demirel congratulated him for the role he played in the process.¹¹⁶ President Demirel never defended the civilian government against any encroachment by the armed forces during the February 28th coup process. He re-directed an intelligence report sent to him by the Police Intelligence concerning the on-going coup activities in the Navy to the General Staff instead of investigating the claims. When the report and its content were leaked to the public, the president still remained silent.¹¹⁷ The president could have simply defended the constitutional right of the government to reject the 'advisory' resolutions of the National Security Council on February 28th 1997, but instead he chose to press the government to enforce them.¹¹⁸ In brief, the late President Demirel made sure that the military deposed the incumbent government, albeit not by naked power, but by a novel coup process without the conventional attributes of a coup.

Finally, *politicians* saw an opening for themselves in the coup campaign against the Refah-Yol government. The following assessment by Retired Pakistani Lt General Asad Durrani regarding how politicians approach a coup is valid for Turkey: 'the second choice of every political party in Pakistan is the military. The first is obvious'.¹¹⁹ A few illustrations will suffice to show how politicians 'helped' the coup process 'because they were the chief candidates to assume government if the Islamic-led coalition resigned'.¹²⁰ The leader of the Anavatan Party, Mesut Yılmaz, said that the anti-government coalition was 'a democratic resistance by Turkish society in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and various state organs'.¹²¹ After PM Erbakan resigned on 18 June 1997, Deniz Baykal, the leader of the CHP admitted the new method army officers used to depose the government, but found nothing misguided with it:

Our army contributed to the formation of the public opinion. It informed the society of existing problems and concerns like a democratic mass organization [...] I do not want to say this is appropriate [but] this is my understanding of what happened [...] The least of undesirable methods was therefore chosen, *a brand new method*. The regime was not interrupted, not even an official memorandum was given. Public opinion was engineered; Refah's mask was exposed.¹²²

The elected MPs from Doğru Yol resigned from their political parties to put pressure on their party leader as well as their peers in the National Assembly to withdraw their support for the coalition.¹²³ High-ranking military officers played a role here as well, as they directly prodded

¹¹⁵ 'İddianameden Çıkan 28 Şubat Konuşmaları', T24, 26 May 2013, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/iddianameden-cikan-28-subat-konusmalari/230709>.

¹¹⁶ Vural Savaş, *Anılarım: Bir Dönemin Perde Arkası* (Bilgi Yayınevi, 2012), p. 160.

¹¹⁷ Değirmenci, *28 Şubat'ın Çözülen Kodları*, p. 46.

¹¹⁸ Ezgi Gürses, *28 Şubat Demokrasi Ters Şeritte* (İstanbul: Şule Yayınları, Haziran, 2012), p. 91.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Babar Sattar, 'Pakistan: Return to Praetorianism', in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 285–412, 408.

¹²⁰ Demirel, 'Soldiers and Civilians', p. 135.

¹²¹ Muzaffer Şahin, *MGK 28 Şubat Öncesi ve Sonrası* (Kayseri: Ufuk Kitabevi, 1998), p. 59.

¹²² 'RP'nin Maskesini Askerler İndirdi', *Sabah*, 18 June 1997, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/1997/06/18/>.

¹²³ 'Tarihi Görev Sizi Bekliyor', *Sabah*, 14 March 1997, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/1997/05/14/>.

these MPs to resign from the government. A Vice-Admiral in the Turkish Navy admitted in his memoirs that he and Turkey's Ambassador to the EU pressed in a dinner party Turhan Tayan, the National Defense Minister from the DYP in the Refah-Yol government, to resign from the government because 'one cannot claim to be an Atatürkist and yet continue to sit in this government cabinet'.¹²⁴

Long, Slow, 'Legal' and Violent

The February 28th coup was made gradually on purpose by supposedly civilian and democratic forces so that the coup would not appear as one. Another reason the coup was spread over a process was that although actions may have seemed against the government, the real objective was to undermine the *idea* of 'political/public Islam'.¹²⁵ The February 28th coup sought to correct what was left incomplete in the 'veto coup' of May 1960 to permanently exclude certain societal sectors from the government.¹²⁶ In doing so, it deviated from the past practices of the Turkish military during its interventions. The military used to be careful to not be perceived as favouring a particular class, ethnicity or religion at the expense of the rest when it decided to overthrow existing governments. It was true that the May 27th 1960 coup was a 'veto coup', '...to curtail the participation in politics of leaders supported by the more traditional and conservative rural masses'.¹²⁷ Yet, once the coup action was over and successful, the 1960 coup communiqué issued via radio said that 'our action is not against any particular person or group'. A similar assessment can be made for the 1980 coup d'état.¹²⁸ The February 28th coup, on the other hand, was widely perceived as undermining a particular segment of society. It is for this reason that it left such a bitter taste and causes so much division within the armed forces itself.¹²⁹

The peculiarities of the February 28th had direct consequences for military and politics in Turkey. Since February 28th coup was done in a *unique style* over a *process* without soldiers and tanks leaving their barracks, they did not return to their barracks after the coup either. This rendered the coup *permanent*.¹³⁰ As chief of General Staff General Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu (1998-2002) said after the fall of the Refah-Yol government, 'February 28 process is not over; its duration may be 10 years, 20 years, 100 years or 500 years. As long as religious reactionism continues, February 28th page shall never be closed'.¹³¹ This was a sharp break with the tradition for the Turkish military since it 'always and quickly returned to its barracks after correcting the wrongs in the system'.¹³²

¹²⁴ Atilla Kiyat, *Üç Yıldız Bir Penaltı* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2010), p. 394.

¹²⁵ Yavuz, 'Cleansing Islam from the Public Sphere'.

¹²⁶ Huntington, *Political Order*, pp. 222–4.

¹²⁷ Huntington, *Political Order*, p. 224; Aytekin, *İhtilal Çıkmazı* (Dünya Matbaası, 1967), p. 229.

¹²⁸ Ahmet Evin, 'Changing Patterns of Cleavages Before and After 1980', in Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (eds), *State Democracy and the Military in Turkey in the 1980s* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), pp. 201–15, 211; Sabri Yirmibeşoğlu, *Askeri ve Siyasal Anılarım* (Kastaş, 1999), p. 316.

¹²⁹ Retd. Major General Ahmet Bertan Nogaylaroğlu, *Milli Görüş'ten Silivri'ye Bir General* (İstanbul: İrfan Yayıncılık, Şubat 2015), p. 173–4, 178, 180; Retd. Brigadier General Yılmaz Tezkan's memoirs *Hayatımdan İzler: Türkiye'de Asker Olmak Zor İştir* (İstanbul: Ülke Yayınları, Haziran 2013), pp. 345–6; İsmail Hakkı Pekin and Ahmet Yavuz, *Asker ve Siyaset: Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Sivil-Asker İlişkileri* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2014), p. 112, 213.

¹³⁰ Hatem Ete, '28 Şubat Bin Yıl mı Sürecekti?' *SETA*, 1 March 2009, <http://setav.org/tr/28-subat-bin-yil-mi-surecekti/yorum/75>.

¹³¹ Kılıç, 2012.

¹³² For Rtd. Navy Admiral Nusret Güner's remarks along these lines, see Toygun Atilla, *Sakıncalı Amiral* (İstanbul: Kırmızıkedî, May 2014), p. 53; See the remarks by Adnan Çelikoğlu, a Rtd. Staff Colonel and a participant in the 27 May 1960 coup, in his memoirs *Bir Darbeci Subayın Anıları: 27 Mayıs Öncesi ve Sonrası* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, May 2010), p. 63.

As against the claim that an activity must be illegal for it to be coup,¹³³ the February 28th was staged openly through ‘theoretically constitutional political operations,’¹³⁴ and psychological warfare. This implies that if we were to take ‘illegality’ as a criterion of a coup, the February 28th could not have been one because the Refah-Yol government *resigned* instead of its power being *seized* by coup perpetrators. The National Security Council, the main mechanism for the military to drive the government into a corner, was a constitutional mechanism. However, focusing too much on the ‘legality’ clause without noticing that armed forces was not authorised to open a psychological warfare against a government and may not independently collect intelligence on its own society without ever letting the National Security Council or the government at the helm, may lead us to miss the changing face and shape of new coups.

American Ambassador to Turkey, James W. Spain (1980-1981) and Nicholas Ludington were only partially correct when they remarked that, ‘the three military interventions since 1960 [1960, 1971, and 1997] have been swift, nearly bloodless, and relatively popular.’¹³⁵ For, pre-1997 interventions were certainly swift but their popularity is debatable and at least two of them were not bloodless at all. The Turkish prime minister and two his ministers were executed after the 1960 coup while hundreds of thousands of people were taken into custody, hundreds of people were tortured in prisons, thousands were tried for capital offenses, tens of people were hanged, and leading politicians were banned from political activities after the 1980 coup d’état. The February 28th coup may look different at first glance because no blood was spilt on the streets, but the coup was violent nevertheless.

The Constitutional Court shut down the Refah in January 1998 on grounds of its being ‘the center of activities against secularism’. Erbakan in addition to some other ‘Islamist’ politicians were later banned from politics for five years. The then Mayor of İstanbul Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was sent to prison on charges of inciting violence and religious discrimination by reading a poem. Tens of radio stations were shut down, many associations were closed down and their properties were confiscated.¹³⁶ Tens of Imam-Hatip schools were shut down and their graduates were no more able to go to university departments of social and physical sciences because of YÖK’s new official restrictions. Tens of academics and civil servants were sacked from universities and public institutions. Thousands of veiled young girls were not admitted to universities, most of who were forced to quit the school.¹³⁷

Conclusion

The February 28th coup by process in Turkey is a testimony to the critical evolution of coup d’états after the Cold War. This article argued that coups may no longer be staged on a certain day, they may be violent without being bloody, and may be openly executed in a long process. Civilian involvement in addition to military officers and walking around the edges of constitutionality form some of its most intriguing and perplexing new features, however counterintuitive this may sound.

¹³³ Powell and Thyne, ‘Global Instances’, p. 251; Alberto Alesina and Roberto Perotti, ‘Income distribution, political instability and investment’, *European Economic Review* 40 (1996): pp. 1203–28, 1205.

¹³⁴ Cercas, *The Anatomy*, p. 33.

¹³⁵ Nicholas S. Ludington and James W. Spain, ‘Dateline Turkey: The Case for Patience’, *Foreign Policy* 50 (Spring, 1983), p. 156.

¹³⁶ Parliamentary Report, 2012, pp. 1168–72.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 1174–80.

Although coups now disappeared in the developed West, they may put on new faces in the *developing* rest, where army officers may find new allies to recruit as well as new cracks and loopholes to exploit to their advantage on the fringes of their frail democracies and defective constitutions. Though untouched for space concerns in this article, the question of why militaries revise their methods of intervention and seek new allies needs to be accounted for as well. In the case of the February 28th coup process, one may draw attention to two factors: the end of the state's monopoly over media outlets with the corollary increase in the number of TV channels in the 1990s; and external actors, in particular how the US approached a coup in Turkey in the 1990s. Whatever the reason(s) may be, however, students of CMR would do better if they revisited their fundamental variables so that they are more able to call more and more obscure and complex cases of coups for what they are.

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